



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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For immediate release

- 1. Shop towels block Muscatine sewer line, lead to bypass**
- 2. Burlington bypasses to Mississippi River**

SHOP TOWELS BLOCK MUSCATINE SEWER LINE, LEAD TO BYPASS

MEDIA CONTACT: Dennis Ostwinkle at (319) 653-2135.

MUSCATINE — Shop towels blocking a sewer line in Muscatine led to a wastewater bypass discovered Wednesday.

A citizen reported the bypass, located in the area above the Park Ave. bridge, to the city on Wednesday afternoon. The city cleared the sewer line by 11 a.m. Thursday. Because the city did not know when the bypass actually began, and because the bypass was not a continuous flow, the city is unable to estimate the amount of wastewater bypassed.

“This citizen did the right thing by reporting the bypass to the city,” said Russell Royce, an environmental specialist in the DNR’s Washington field office. “If you notice sewage leaking from a manhole, lift station or somewhere else, call your city officials right away, even if it’s after normal business hours.”

The wastewater bypassed into Mad Creek, which flows into the Mississippi River.

The city has used lime to disinfect the area, and the DNR recommends that people and pets avoid the area for 48 hours. The city has also taken water samples in the creek.

Because the city did not report the bypass to the DNR until 2 p.m. Thursday, the DNR will issue a notice of violation. Cities are required to report bypasses from mechanical failures within 12 hours of discovery or onset.

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BURLINGTON BYPASSES TO MISSISSIPPI RIVER

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BURLINGTON — The City of Burlington bypassed almost 40,000 gallons of wastewater to the Mississippi River, beginning on Tuesday.

Heavy rain led to an overflow from the sanitary sewer to the storm sewer. Sanitary sewer systems treat waste from homes and businesses, while storm sewers are designed to carry rainwater, untreated, to a stream or lake. Sewage bypassed any treatment, heading through the storm drain system to the Mississippi River.

The city's sewer system is equipped with data loggers, which allows them to determine when bypasses began and the volumes. While this bypass began at 10 p.m. Tuesday, the city did not check the data until Thursday.

“Data loggers are a great way to keep an eye on a city's sewer system and minimize bypasses,” said Russell Royce, an environmental specialist in the DNR's Washington field office. “We encourage cities to check the data frequently to avoid situations like these, where a bypass goes undetected for two days.”

The city stopped the bypass at 1:30 Thursday afternoon. The city is planning on installing catch basins to collect overflow from the sanitary sewer until it can be redirected back into the sanitary sewer.